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SUBJECT: SPECIAL ENVOY NATSIOS' SUDAN CONTACT GROUP MEETING

Classified By: DCM Kevin M. Johnson for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On February 9, Special Envoy Andrew Natsios joined the Sudan Contact Group meeting in Oslo to assess the state of play in Sudan. Although implementation of the CPA has been stalled, all parties stressed the need to maintain a unified Sudan and to encourage an IGAD summit to set benchmarks to measure implementation progress. On Darfur, parties agreed that patience was exhausted and that the time had come for stronger measures. The parties (including the EU) expressed the view that it would be useful to meet soon to discuss stronger unified measures. In a follow-on meeting with Norwegians, both sides agreed that the Contact Group needs to find a way to target Bashir and his close circle without causing a reaction that would further exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. Norwegians favor working with Eritrea on a planned all-Darfur-parties meeting in Libya. END SUMMARY

Vraalsen on the CPA and Abyei

12. (SBU) Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC) Chair Tom Vraalsen noted some progress in establishing CPA structures such as the Government of National Unity. However, substantive political problems persist, all essentially involving either oil or the militias. Although the AEC has repeatedly debated these issues, there has been no progress. Vraalsen pleaded for the highest levels in capitals to reengage on the CPA. He explained a Kenyan suggestion to convene an IGAD Summit on the CPA and urged the group to support this plan. He thought the Summit should set benchmarks and ask the AEC to report to IGAD on those areas.

13. (SBU) Growing concern with attacks on the AEC was raised, particularly the statements that the AEC is overstepping its mandate on Abyei. Vraalsen pointed out that Abyei is clearly a flashpoint that needs an urgent resolution. The EU representative Jean-Christophe Belliard suggested that perhaps a Security Council statement on Abyei would help.

14. (SBU) Belliard then urged the group to be unambiguous in supporting the unity of Sudan. The UK representative Jessica Irvine agreed that stronger messages on the unity of Sudan by the international community were important. She suggested taking a longer-term perspective on a deal that would cover oil revenue sharing so as to promote the concept of unity. The group noted the conflicting interests of the parties with regard to unity. Belliard also noted that the business community is working towards deals that reflect two Sudans.

He urged the group to press countries with large business interests to support unity. Some NGOs operating in the south have been promoting separatism and members were urged to discourage their NGOs from taking this approach.

15. (SBU) The group concluded that the international community should frame the issue so the parties see it in their own best interest to have a unified Sudan. This could be done if development aid were seen to flow to the south. It also might be done by franker discussions with the SPLM to outline the likely bloody consequences of an attempt to separate.

In conclusion, the group agreed to:
--stress the unity of Sudan;
--support the IGAD Summit proposal; and
--support the AEC through more pressure from capitals.

In addition, three Contact Group members agreed to provide weekly updates on three key areas: UK (security), the Netherlands (Abyei), and Canada (elections).

Sudan Consortium and Debt Relief

16. (SBU) Netherlands representative Huub Buisse reported that reconstruction is slow but there is some movement. He urged monitoring of the UN-WB agreement in the Sudan Consortium. Because of the likely mid-term implementation of the UN-WB programs (due to limited government capacity in the south) quick-impact directly funded programs would be useful. UK representative Jessica Irvine raised the question of debt relief for Khartoum. All parties agreed this would be premature.

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Darfur Humanitarian Situation and the LRA

17. (SBU) UNMIS Mark Bowden described a deteriorating security situation in Darfur where rebel groups are becoming more fractured. Militias are taking bolder actions, attacking IDPs and holding entire villages ransom. Attacks on NGO staff and arrest of workers has created a new climate of fear among aid personnel. Attacks appear to be orchestrated by Khartoum to undermine trust in UN and NGOs ability to provide protection and relief. Bowden confirmed estimates of 5,500 active LRA members who are splitting into 3 groups operating in CAR, Chad, and DRC. Lack of political will in the DRC and instability in south Sudan mean these actions will likely continue.

U.S. View on Darfur: Time for Tougher Measures

18. (SBU) Special Envoy Natsios argued that recent actions by the Sudanese government, which included public and private discouraging of support of phase two of the UN Darfur plan, conducting an arms buildup in Darfur, preventing a meeting of non-signatories, and continued obstruction of humanitarian delivery in Darfur, indicated that the time has probably come for a new approach. Recent attacks on NGOs operating in Darfur show that a line had been crossed and that the Contact Group needs to come up with strong measures in the form of specific tests for Khartoum to see how they will respond. United actions will be seen by Khartoum as a sign that the international community is serious and not issuing empty threats. Natsios informed the group that the U.S. is moving toward Plan B and wants to work with the contact group to determine what this plan should include.

EU Also Interested in Tougher Measures

19. (SBU) EU representative Jean-Christophe Belliard

expressed interest in stronger measures and a Contact Group meeting to discuss what these measures may be. In bringing parties back to negotiations, he suggested that Eritrea may have a role. UK representative Jessica Irvin suggested restarting the political process given that rebel groups seem too fragmented to work with the international community. A key factor would be an operational cease fire.

¶10. (SBU) UN Envoy Eliasson stressed that the international community must be unified in its approach and that Khartoum must be convinced that working with the international community is in its self-interest. Non-signatories must be brought on board and accept an AU role in any deal. Also, hostilities must cease. International consensus on these issues will show Khartoum that there is political will to act on the problem. The international community also needs to figure out how to bring Libya, Eritrea, and Chad into the existing process.

Norwegian Support for Stronger Measures

¶11. (C) In a private meeting with Raymond Johansen and his staff after the day's Contact Meeting on Sudan, Natsios reviewed the possible need for stronger measures. In addition to carrots and sticks, the Norwegians suggested that benchmarks are needed to measure progress. Both sides agreed it would be useful to have a full briefing on tougher measures and that the Contact Group needs to find the right balance to keep Khartoum from reacting against displaced persons camps. Any sanctions must affect Bashir and his close circle directly or he will not respond. Norwegian State Secretary Raymond Johansen said the GON needs a clear command structure from the UN, not the AU, in order for Norway to provide heavy package support. The priority is Darfur and the battalion is ready to go but only if the helmets are blue.

An Eritrean Role, A Tripoli Meeting

¶12. (C) Johansen argued that it was important to bring Eritrea into the process because of their role in Somalia and Sudan. Johansen characterized the proposed Eritrean-brokered, Tripoli-hosted Darfur Parties meeting as

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"the only show in town" and said the Eritreans want the rest of the international community involved. Both sides agreed that a new AU representative would be required due to the non-signatories distrust of Salim Salim. A compromise position must be found short of a CPA for Darfur that Khartoum will support. U.S. officials suggested that greater coordination with the AU and the UN was needed on this and that the Contract Group needs to consider what we want the rebels to do and what we are building them up for.

¶13. (U) Special Envoy Andrew Natsios' staff cleared on this message.
WHITNEY